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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 5814  
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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 6833  
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RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 2517  
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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR XOXO  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- 11. Mieast
- 12. U.S.-Israel Relations
- 13. Iran

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Key stories in the media  
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HaQaretz reported that Washington issued another diplomatic protest

over Israeli conduct in East Jerusalem on Monday, its second in as many weeks. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman summoned Michael Oren, Israel's Ambassador to Washington, to tell him that the U.S. views Sunday's eviction of two Palestinian families from homes in East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood as a "provocative" and "unacceptable" act that violates Israel's obligations under the Roadmap. Oren allegedly responded by saying that the buildings in question have been Jewish-owned since before Israel's founding, and that a court ordered the families' evictions because they had violated the terms of their leases.

Leading media quoted PA President Mahmoud Abbas as saying yesterday, at the opening of Fatah's sixth convention, that Palestinians have a legitimate right to engage in QresistanceQ against Israel, but that Qwe must not stain our legitimate struggle with terror.Q Media reported that Israeli Arab Knesset Member Ahmed Tibi made strong statements at the conference. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted DM Ehud Barak that Fatah's decisions will bear witness to its maturity. One of the participants in the conference, Khaled Abu Asba, one of only two perpetrators still alive of the 1978 Coastal Road Massacre, in which 35 Israelis were killed and 71 wounded, is not willing to express remorse or to apologize for what he did. However, he said: QWe have to reach a solution of peace, and thatQs what is important now.Q Abu Asba made the remarks in an interview with HaQaretz.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that Israel Qis preparingQ ahead of the presentation of President ObamaQs peace plan. Major media quoted DM Barak as saying yesterday that the President will soon prepare his plan. Barak was speaking to the KnessetQs Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

All media reported that the Labor Party may split tonight in the wake of party chairman Ehud BarakQs insistence on revising the partyQs constitution.

The Jerusalem Post quoted settler leaders as saying that Netanyahu has already frozen new construction.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Jordanian FM Nasser Judeh strongly backed the Obama administration efforts to garner confidence-building measures toward Israel toward Israel from Arab states.

Israel Radio reported that PM Benjamin Netanyahu and FM Avigdor Lieberman have agreed to a pullout from the northern village of Ghajar. HaQaretz reported that Lieberman wants a fence to run through Ghajar. The radio cited Ghajar residentsQ opposition to the move, as they say that Israel conquered the village from Syria in the Six-Day War.

Leading media reported that yesterday PM Netanyahu visited the Negev Nuclear Research Center in Dimona. Media reported that he praised the employees there for Qstrengthening IsraelQs security.

HaQaretz reported that the IDF is gradually reducing its use of pillboxes -- a British invention dating back to the British Mandate -- in the West Bank, given the decline in the number of terror attacks and the consequent reduction in the number of troops stationed there. One of the pillboxes' main functions was to give a sense of security to settlers, who suffered frequent shooting attacks on the roads in the early years of the intifada.

HaQaretz reported that yesterday the High Court of Justice issued an interim order barring the IDFQs Civil Administration in the West Bank from destroying a building constructed of tires and mud that is to serve as a school and kindergarten for the Jahalin tribe in the area of Khan al-Ahmar northeast of Jerusalem. The eco-friendly school, built of inexpensive materials, was the initiative of members of the Italian non-governmental organization Vento di Terra (Wind of the Earth).

HaQaretz reported that there was a sharp increase in safety-related aviation incidents of varying seriousness last year that involved foreign air carriers in Israel, according to the Transportation Ministry's annual civil aviation safety report, a copy of which was obtained by HaQaretz. There were 112 such incidents involving foreign airlines in 2008, compared to 36 in 2007 and 50 in 2006, according to the report, which was prepared by the ministry's chief

aviation safety investigator, Yitzhak Raz. Raz noted that the recent downgrade of Israel by the FAAQs reflected the U.S. agencyQs desire to warn of Israel's limited capacity, in the view of the FAA, to comply with international standards, but not that Israeli civil aviation is unsafe. Raz did express concern, however, regarding oversight of the private plane sport aviation sector.

Saying that the QAmericans are quite fair in distributing their custom,Q The Jerusalem PostQs social column reported on Special Envoy George MitchellQs stay at the Inbal Hotel in Jerusalem.

QTzikiQ Sela, the head of the Immigration Authority's Oz unit that implements expulsions of foreign workers and their families, was quoted as saying in an interview with Maariv that organizations assisting foreign workers are interested in the Qobliteration of Israel.

The media reported that Amos Keinan, a columnist, painter, sculptor,

playwright, novelist, and one of IsraelQs earliest satirists, passed away yesterday at the age of 82. In 1970, he co-founded the Israeli-Palestinian Council, and later joined Ariel SharonQs Shlomzion Party. One of KeinanQs daughters told Israel Radio that he did not view the facets of his political activity as contradictory.

HaQaretz (Hebrew Ed.) led with the success of former U.S. President Bill ClintonQs personal mission to rescue two female American journalists from imprisonment in North Korea.

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I. Mideast:  
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Block Quotes:  
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II. "Obama and the Three Noes"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (8/5): QPresident Barack Obama's first encounter with Middle Eastern realities ended in great disappointment. His effort to restart the peace process.... Instead of Obama's suggestions being received with cries of joy, they were answered with three noes: Israel will not freeze the settlements, the Palestinians will not resume negotiations, and the Arab states will not take any steps toward normalization with Israel. The final blow to Obama's initiative was dealt by the Saudi Foreign Minister, Saud al-Faisal, who announced in Washington last week that first, Israel must quit all the territories and a Palestinian state must arise; only then will the Saudis talk about normalization. In other words, don't bother them now with ideas for meetings with Israelis and opening Saudi airspace to El Al planes. Call them after you have gotten Israel out of the territories. These three noes painted Obama as extremely weak.... But if the President does present detailed principles for a final-status agreement, that in itself will not solve the conflict. It is more important that Obama convince the skeptical public on both sides that a) peace is possible and b) their lives will improve if it is achieved. No less important, his positions must be backed by both sticks and carrots, as well as a willingness to get into confrontations and pay a political price. Nice words will not suffice. And he must find solutions to problems such as what to do with Gaza and how to ease the internal rift in Israel if settlements are evacuated. But above all, Obama must demonstrate total commitment to the job. If he evinces doubts, or despairs in the face of the parties' stubbornness and rejectionism, his presidency will end up being just another episode in the lengthening series called QThe Missed Peace.

II. "FatahQs Goals"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (8/5): QThere's nothing all Israelis -- no matter what their political inclinations -- would like better than to receive a genuine message of reconciliation and accommodation from Fatah's sixth General Assembly, which opened in Bethlehem yesterday.... But thus far, the signals from Bethlehem are not the sort to bolster hope.... Unfortunately Fatah's make-or-break rivalry with Hamas is

underpinning the more radical elements within it rather than inspiring ideals of coexistence. In the competition for the hearts and minds of ordinary Palestinians -- already indoctrinated by hostile, anti-Israeli propaganda in the classrooms, media and mosques -- readiness for compromise isn't regarded as an attractive selling point.... Israel's government and the new American administration are seeking to create a climate for substantive progress in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The Fatah conference represents an opportunity for Abbas and his colleagues to assure the watching world, and emphasize to their own constituency, that their goal is real peace -- that they are committed to the path of viable reconciliation with Israel. Sadly and counterproductively for all sides, the indications thus far are quite different.

### III. "Injustice in Sheikh Jarrah"

Ha'aretz editorialized (8/5): QThe eviction of two Palestinian families from their homes in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, in order to replace them with Jewish families, predictably sparked harsh condemnations. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urged the government to refrain from such actions, which she described as QprovocativeQ.... The sight of the evicted Palestinian families, who had lived in these houses for decades, paints Israel in the world's eyes as a country that maintains a cruel regime of occupation, oppresses the weak and strives to create political facts in the disputed city under the guise of the Qrule of lawQ. The government must immediately return the Palestinian residents to their homes in Sheikh Jarrah and cancel the eviction orders that have been issued against additional houses. And the neighborhood's fate must be determined via diplomatic negotiations.

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### 12. U.S.-Israel Relations:

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#### Block Quotes:

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#### "Idolatry by Any Other Name"

Avraham Feder, a Masorti (Conservative) Rabbi in Jerusalem and the author of Torah through a Zionist Vision, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (8/5): QThat American Jews have contributed to Obama's rise is not surprising. Most American Jews vote Democrat, even if the presidential candidate is a Carter or a McGovern. Israeli Jews may not vote for the U.S. president, but they suffer from a neurotic side-effect of this Qadoration-bordering-on-idolatryQ syndrome. They display a neurotic anxiety at every manifestation of presidential approval or disapproval. How many presidents have been described sycophantically by Israeli representatives as Qthe best friend Israel has ever hadQ Or conversely, how many Israeli prime ministers have been lamented as having Qgotten off on the wrong footQ with this or that president? Such manic-depressive reactions are inappropriate for a nation -- no matter how small -- that is truly free. This is not to underestimate the power of the American president -- whether a Truman, a Nixon or an Obama.... National self-respect should never mean arrogance. The State of Israel recognizes that the United States is its principle ally. Israeli political, military, diplomatic and cultural leadership should always be mobilized toward cultivating maximal cooperation between the two countries. At the same time, the determination of policies and strategies, while soliciting U.S. approval, must never be exclusively dependent upon that approval. The single overriding proposition that must guide our struggle for survival and growth is that our national freedom should never condition itself upon the worship of any human leader, no matter how powerful. By any other name, that is still idolatry.

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### 13. Iran:

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#### Block Quotes:

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"Increasingly Worrisome Signals"

Former Israeli Ambassador to the U.N. Dr. Dore Gold wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (8/5): QWe are now witnessing a trend among senior commentators in the United States to minimize the dimension of the Iranian threat, despite solid information to the contrary. Their aim is to influence the Obama administration to be content with a diplomatic dialogue with Tehran without conducting a tough policy to stop its nuclear program. It appears that, following the Iraq War, many commentators are increasingly tired of any confrontation with the challenge posed by Tehran. This bias constitutes a means of escaping tough decisions that the West will have to take following the failure of the nuclear negotiations with Iran over the past six years.

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